

Rationale for Elk Priority Habitat Mapping – Ochoco National Forest

Date: 5/5/2017

Author: Andrew Passarelli (USFS)

Collaborators: Robbie Piehl (USFS), Kevin Keown (USFS), Greg Jackle (ODFW), Sara Gregory (ODFW), Matt Keenan (ODFW)

Background: The origin of this document and corresponding map and GIS shapefile was initially discussed as part of the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision process during a workshop in Pendleton, OR in spring 2017. The Ochoco NF with assistance and collaboration with ODFW - Prineville Field Office utilized a process outlined during the workshop to identify Elk Priority Habitat areas across the Ochoco National Forest. These areas were further refined post-workshop, and the subsequent rationale for the final areas selected is outlined below. These areas are not static, meaning the original intent was to focus on improving habitat conditions in these locations first, with the ability to shift priority areas to new subwatersheds as others are accomplished across the Forest (similar in nature to the model the Aquatics resource uses for Priority Subwatersheds and the Watershed Condition Framework).

Overall Rationale and Sideboards

- Avoided areas that are designated as Wilderness or Roadless because secure habitat already existed. In addition, we would not be able to have a significant (or any) impact on these areas in many cases as roads would not be closed, and other habitat improvement tools are not applicable or not allowed.
- In this first round of identification, avoided areas where elk security may not be attainable due to social disturbance factors from developed recreation sites or areas receiving disproportionate use like those close to Prineville
- Areas with little opportunity to close additional roads were considered but in many cases ultimately eliminated from consideration
- Based on direction, identified just under 30% of the total “general forest” management designation (see additional instructions at the end for explanation on how this was determined).
- Did not consider effects from implementation of any current or reasonably foreseeable future projects
- Utilized the Blue Mountain Elk Nutrition Model to determine seasonal forage quality related to Daily Digestible Energy
- Subwatersheds identified were done so in groups in most cases in order to provide a larger block of contiguous acreage to be the most effective
- While much of the Forest is utilized by elk, the areas were selected because they represent one or more of the following in no particular order of importance: 1) existing quality habitat, 2) known areas of elk use, 3) opportunity for improvement in elk security, 4) provide connectivity to quality habitats, and/or 5) potential to maintain elk on Forest/ off of adjacent Private land
- Attempted to identify priority areas throughout a range of elk habitats, and not focus solely on one type (i.e. winter range, summer range, transitory, calving, etc.)
- Attempted to identify the best candidate subwatersheds first, and then tried to balance the priority areas between the two Ranger Districts

Individual Subwatershed Rationale

Powell Creek – North Fork Beaver Creek

- Quality habitat currently exists for elk, this is a known area of use for elk
- Opportunity for additional road closures, and additional effective closures on administratively closed roads, to improve elk security
- Area serves as transitory range and also provides connectivity from summer range in Black Canyon to winter range along Forest Boundary
- Variety of seasonal forage based on Daily Digestible Energy (Blue Mountains Elk Model)
- Area is within a Terrestrial Restoration and Conservation Strategy priority watershed (Upper Beaver Creek), where elk is identified as a priority social/economic vertebrate
- Area has been the focus of recent habitat restoration efforts, with the potential for additional habitat restoration

Foley Creek / Headwaters Trout Creek / Upper Bear Creek

- Quality habitat currently exists for elk, this is a known area of use for elk
- Area is within summer range and is adjacent to private land
- Opportunity for additional road closures, and additional effective closures on administratively closed roads to improve elk security
- Variety of seasonal forage based on Daily Digestible Energy (Blue Mountains Elk Model)
- Connectivity to Mill Creek Wilderness, an area currently secure for elk
- An area that receives heavy hunting pressure
- Area falls within Bear Creek AMP project area, which has habitat restoration activities currently proposed and yet to be implemented

Headwaters Elliot Creek / Allen Creek / Upper Mountain Creek

- Quality elk habitat immediately adjacent to and surrounding Big Summit Prairie, an area of known elk use
- Area provides connectivity from off-forest winter range, through transitory range and summer range across the Forest to Big Summit Prairie, a known area of elk use
- Summer forage potential is high based on Daily Digestible Energy (Blue Mountains Elk Model), and also has a variety of seasonal forage (i.e. areas of poor, marginal, and good)
- Area provides connectivity to Bridge Creek Wilderness, an area currently secure for elk
- By improving security in this area, there is potential to keep elk off Private land that lies to the north.
- Area falls within a Terrestrial Restoration and Conservation Strategy priority watershed (Upper North Fork Crooked River), where elk is identified as a priority social/economic vertebrate
- Portions of area falls within Howard Elliot Johnson EIS project area which has identified numerous acres of habitat restoration and miles of road closures that have yet to be implemented
- Portions of area falls within Black Mountain EIS project area which has proposed numerous miles of road closures and acres of habitat restoration that have yet to be implemented

Porter Creek / Crazy Creek – Deep Creek / Jackson Creek / Little Summit Prairie Creek

- Priority Watershed Condition Framework watershed for the Forest
- Area falls within two Terrestrial Restoration and Conservation Strategy priority watersheds (Deep Creek and Upper North Fork Crooked River), where elk is identified as a priority social/economic vertebrate
- Good seasonal forage based on Daily Digestible Energy (Blue Mountains Elk Model)
- Opportunity for additional road closures, and installation of effective closures on administratively closed roads to improve elk security
- Area serves as high quality summer range and calving habitat for elk
- Potential to retain elk on Forest as elk move both north and south from this area onto Private land
- Portions of area falls within Black Mountain EIS project area which has proposed numerous miles of road closures and acres of habitat restoration that have yet to be implemented
- Area has been the focus of recent habitat restoration efforts, with the potential for additional habitat restoration

Newsome Creek / Maury Creek - Crooked River

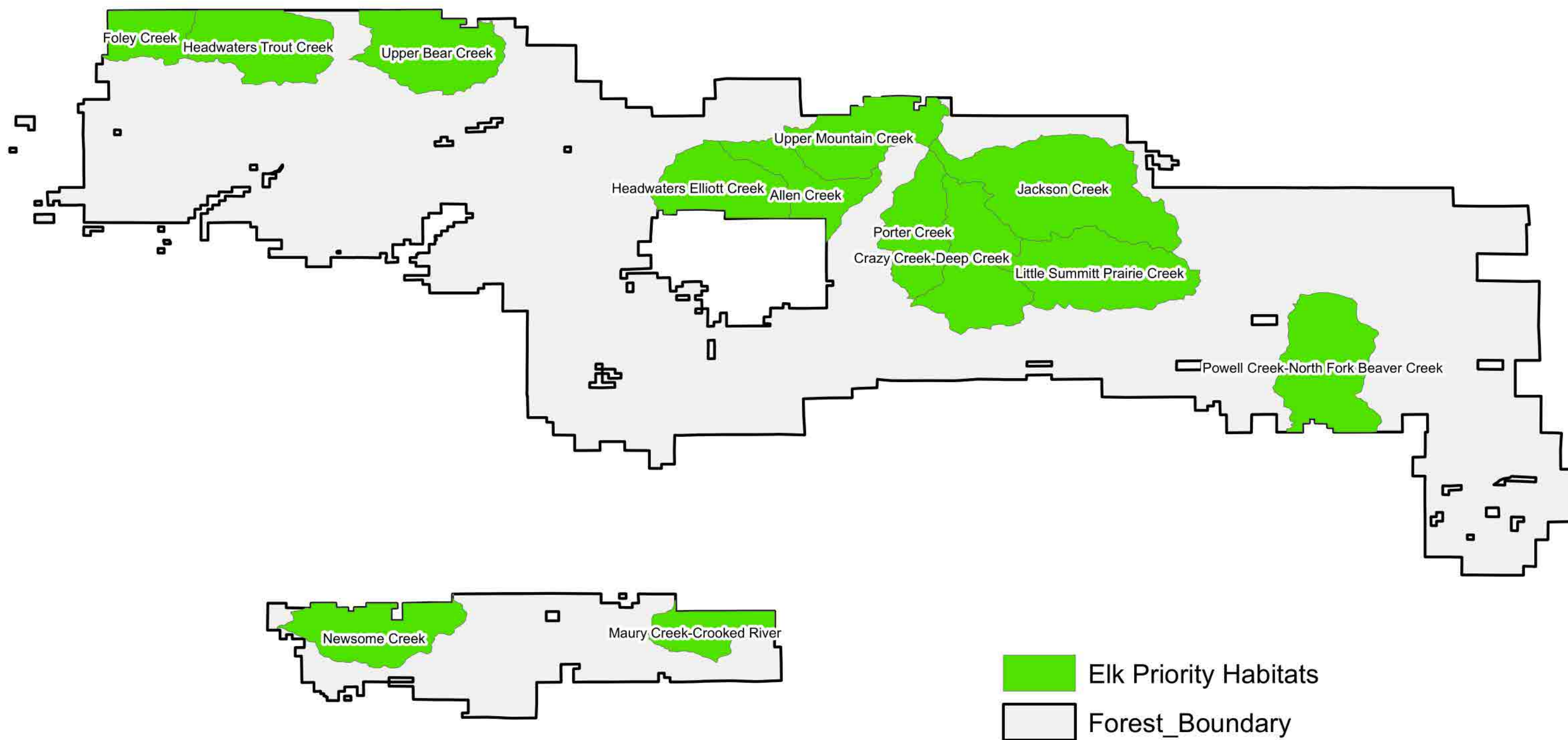
- Potential to keep elk on Forest as elk move from this area onto Private land
- Area of known elk use within the Maury Mountains
- Winter Range and Transitory Range habitat
- Area has been the focus of recent habitat enhancement efforts (including effective barriers), with the potential for additional habitat restoration and miles of road closures

Calculation and Definition of “General Forest” acreage

- 1) We totaled up all the acres within the Forest (including the main body of the Ochoco NF and Maury Mountains, excluding the Crooked River National Grassland) = 614,010 acres
- 2) Then we subtracted management areas that we would not typically be doing work in, or the ability to make significant changes was extremely limited
 - a. Those areas included: Inventoried Roadless Areas; Wilderness; Developed Recreation Areas; Facilities; and Research Natural Areas = 81,282 acres total
- 3) This gave us 532,728 acres of potential “general forest” acres
 - a. These acres include various management areas with specific guidelines for elk management (or road density) [i.e. Winter Range, General Forest Winter Range, and General Forest]
 - b. The other Blue Mountain Forests in their Forest Plan Revision process have eliminated Winter Range and General Forest Winter Range as management areas and are instead treating them as geographical overlays across any/all management area(s) [currently the Ochoco does not have overlapping management areas]

- c. To be consistent with their planning we consolidated all the other management areas that were not originally excluded in 2a and labeled them as “general forest”, which gave us the 532,728 acres total
- 4) Therefore using the < 30% of the total “general forest” acres we ended up with a target of 159,818 acres
- 5) Our current selection of 13 subwatersheds in our proposed habitat mapping gives us 160,689 acres or 30.1%

Ochoco National Forest Elk Priority Habitats - 2017



From: Beaupre, James - FS
Sent: Fri, 4 Mar 2022 20:36:34 +0000
To: Peer, Beth- FS
Cc: Joosen, Christopher -FS
Subject: FW: Sustainable Trails Initiative Briefing Paper

Enter Monty Gregg!!

From: Gregg, Monty -FS <mgregg@fs.fed.us>
Sent: Friday, December 22, 2017 8:01 AM
To: Machnik, Lisa - FS <lmachnik@fs.fed.us>; Forson, Stacey L -FS <slforson@fs.fed.us>; Keown, Kevin - FS <kkeown@fs.fed.us>
Cc: Asbridge, Gary -FS <gasbridge@fs.fed.us>; Beaupre, James - FS <jbeaupre@fs.fed.us>
Subject: RE: Sustainable Trails Initiative Briefing Paper

All great stuff Lisa. Thanks for bringing up the Core Habitat Analysis. The Deschutes Forest received two years Challenge Cost Share funding to develop an analysis process to analyze trail impacts and get at some of the wildlife concerns of sustainable trails. The idea was also to use the process as a prototype for the Region. So all the bio.'s got together to develop this core habitat analysis that was formalized by Brock and Lauri. It would be good to invite them to give their presentation to the Ochoco Trail Collaborative.



Monty Gregg
District Wildlife Biologist
Region 6 Upland Game Bird Center of Excellence

Forest Service
Deschutes National Forest, Sisters Ranger District

p: 541-549-7724

f: 541-549-7746

mgregg@fs.fed.us

Highway 20 and Pine Street

Sisters, OR 97759

www.fs.fed.us



Caring for the land and serving people

From: Machnik, Lisa - FS
Sent: Thursday, December 21, 2017 9:40 AM
To: Forson, Stacey L -FS <slforson@fs.fed.us>; Gregg, Monty -FS <mgregg@fs.fed.us>; Keown, Kevin -FS <kkeown@fs.fed.us>
Cc: Asbridge, Gary -FS <gasbridge@fs.fed.us>; Beaupre, James - FS <jbeaupre@fs.fed.us>
Subject: RE: Sustainable Trails Initiative Briefing Paper

Thanks Monty and Stacey. Can you share the BP?

Monty – your voice will be great to have in the group; we have been talking about a number of these things. While you're absolutely right, people tend to focus on building ever more cool trail(s) and the recreational experience, there has been a lot of 'new' talk lately about wildlife, NR resources in general (from invasives to restoration) and a much better understanding of, interest in, and acceptance of tradeoffs from most user groups.

For example, both this group and the Deschutes group are excited to see the core habitat work Laurie and Brock have been doing, and are already talking about how to identify the 'no go' areas where all parties explicitly recognize the value of NOT developing trail access.



Lisa Machnik, PhD
Recreation, Heritage, Lands and Partnerships Staff Officer

Forest Service
Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests, Crooked River National Grassland

p: 541-383-5568 *new number*

c: (b)(6)

f: 541-383-5568

lmachnik@fs.fed.us

63095 Deschutes Market Road

Bend, OR 97701

www.fs.fed.us



Caring for the land and serving people

From: Forson, Stacey L -FS

Sent: Thursday, December 21, 2017 7:59 AM

To: Gregg, Monty -FS <mgregg@fs.fed.us>; Keown, Kevin -FS <kkeown@fs.fed.us>

Cc: Asbridge, Gary -FS <gasbridge@fs.fed.us>; Machnik, Lisa - FS <lmachnik@fs.fed.us>; Beaupre, James - FS <jbeaupre@fs.fed.us>

Subject: RE: Sustainable Trails Initiative Briefing Paper

Excellent thoughts, Monty, thank you very much for sharing. The concept of "core areas" makes sense to me. I've typically been supportive of the use of existing routes for future trails.

I'm sharing your thoughts with Gary, Lisa and Jim Beaupre in hopes of kick-starting this important part of the conceptual planning process.

From: Gregg, Monty -FS

Sent: Thursday, December 21, 2017 7:39 AM

To: Forson, Stacey L -FS <slforson@fs.fed.us>; Keown, Kevin -FS <kkeown@fs.fed.us>

Cc: Asbridge, Gary -FS <gasbridge@fs.fed.us>

Subject: RE: Sustainable Trails Initiative Briefing Paper

Stacy,

Thanks for the opportunity to review the briefing paper. After our conversation the other day, I took your recommendation and reached out to Lisa about the trails collaborative. Lisa and I haven't found time yet to discuss, so this is the first I have seen of it.

I have spent quite a bit of time discussing the concepts of sustainable trails with the Sisters Trails Alliance as well as some of the COTA member. I think about trails a lot from a couple of perspectives; trail user (since I run a ton of trails throughout central Oregon) and habitat manager. The conversation and term sustainable trails means different things to different people. I attended the Oregon Trails Summit in Bend this Fall and what I find from the trails group is, sustainable really pertains to the long-term design and function of the trail, and minimizing impacts to hydrologic function of the area. In short developing a cool trail that is there to last the ages.

My conversation and concept of sustainable trails, broadens the picture to include, and what I continue to come back to with the user groups is the discussion of "Core Areas". Places that are void of roads and trails and the investment from a vegetation management stand point we often put in these areas with long-term restoration objectives. From a sustainability stand point it's not always about avoidance, it can be about development with things like "Roads to Trails". Trail builders are like pioneers or the crew ship enterprise, boldly going where no one has gone before. So often, convert road to trail are not what interests them, but may be in the best interest of all the resources at hand. This is especially important as the group moves forward to look at the landscape, and the cumulative impacts associated with not just the trail aspect but ongoing forest management. Since the trails folk often forget these are working forests and it is a dynamic process. Lastly, what is the trail designed for, often determines the effects? Stacey you and I had this conversation, we often create trails, that were not created to host a race that has 500 people attending. So a through discussion of the intent of the trails systems, and what it will be designed for as well as limitation we place on them.

Sorry to go on and on. These were the thoughts that just came to my mind as I read the briefing. I hope this was helpful. I apologize if not.



Monty Gregg
District Wildlife Biologist
Region 6 Upland Game Bird Center of Excellence

Forest Service
Deschutes National Forest, Sisters Ranger
District

p: 541-549-7724

f: 541-549-7746

mgregg@fs.fed.us

Highway 20 and Pine Street

Sisters, OR 97759

www.fs.fed.us



Caring for the land and serving people

From: Forson, Stacey L -FS
Sent: Wednesday, December 20, 2017 11:40 AM
To: Keown, Kevin -FS <kkeown@fs.fed.us>; Gregg, Monty -FS <mgregg@fs.fed.us>
Cc: Asbridge, Gary -FS <gasbridge@fs.fed.us>
Subject: FW: Sustainable Trails Initiative Briefing Paper

As part of the "bridge" I'm building for the next forest supervisor, I've asked Brye to help with a briefing paper. The missing piece I see is the intersect with natural resource considerations on the "left side of the triangle". If you two could put your eyes on this and provide some comments, that would be helpful!

From: Lefler, Brian - FS
Sent: Wednesday, December 20, 2017 9:29 AM
To: Forson, Stacey L -FS <sforson@fs.fed.us>
Cc: Lair, Patrick G -FS <plair@fs.fed.us>
Subject: Sustainable Trails Initiative Briefing Paper

Hello Stacey,

Please see the attached briefing paper on the Sustainable Trails Initiative. The information is drawn from communications with Jim Beaupre and a review of the meeting notes. Please let me know if you would like an changes.

Thanks,

Brye



Brye Lefler
Community Engagement Specialist
Presidential Management Fellow

United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Ochoco National Forest & Crooked River National Grassland

office: 541-416-6550

mobile: (b)(6)

blefler@fs.fed.us

3160 NE Third Street

Prineville, OR 97754

www.fs.fed.us



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From: Asbridge, Gary -FS
Sent: Wed, 2 May 2018 21:54:12 +0000
To: Kochersberger, Jonathan - FS; Mickelson, Jennifer -FS; Passarelli, Andrew M - FS; Carson, Jennifer - FS; Lugo Mendez, Anastasia - FS
Cc: Beaupre, James - FS; Asbridge, Gary -FS
Subject: Ochoco Trails Strategy follow-up

Hi guys, thanks again for those of you who were able to participate in the meeting last week. Super helpful. I would like a little feedback from you on my proposed next step, which is:

- You guys, or other specialists, overlay the Trail Strategy Group's very draft proposal over whichever GIS layers you feel are pertinent to your resource and produce a map they can use that highlights areas of concern or known presence locations we should avoid. They can then take that info and begin fine tuning their proposal into something more definitive – basically altering existing trail lines and drawing trail lines instead of the boxes they currently have in some areas.

I'm not looking for rocket science here – I'm hoping this would be relatively simple but, as you know, rangers often over-simplify ☺. I'd really like this to be of minimal impact to you all knowing how busy everyone is. In fact, I don't want any of you to do anything yet (I still need to talk to Marcos/Slater about overall priorities and timing) but what I would like from each of you is an estimate of how long it would take to generate the map/info above. I'm going to take a stab for each discipline as to what I think would be useful to the trails strategy group to hopefully put some context on this:

- Hydro/Fish – This one is pretty easy in my opinion and I actually think this is something Dino could likely do. We overlay their proposal on a map with RHCA's identified and note the fish bearing streams, divided into those with ESA listed fish and those without. The basic idea is to avoid riparian areas where and when possible.
- Heritage – Anastasia, it's my understanding from Jay that you are running with this. I know you cannot provide site locations but would it be possible to provide a map that shows high and low probability areas? That way they would at least know which areas would likely require more surveys. (By the way, I sent Jay the T: drive link from Dino – not sure if he sent to you?)
- Botany/invasives – I'm definitely outside my realm of experience here but if we could show known locations of both sensitive plants and known invasive populations that would be of use. Jenny, I know you mentioned that most of the sensitive plants are found in riparian areas; perhaps the aquatics map would suffice for this at this point?
- Wildlife – Not sure how to approach this Andrew – maybe the best thing would be to map areas where you wouldn't want trails because they are already in low road density areas, etc.
- If any of you think at this point I need to include engineering, fuels, or silv please let me know. I'm thinking no at the moment but I may be forgetting something. They will certainly be involved as needed once (if) we get into the NEPA phase.

At this point I want to give them enough info to craft a much better proposal but I don't feel we are anywhere far enough along for you guys to spend a lot of time on this. If you have other thoughts that what I present above I'd love to hear it. A short written narrative highlighting any concerns or ideas would also be useful. Sooo, if you could give me an idea if this will take any time and if so how much

time (half a day, 2 days, three weeks?) that is all I am looking for at the moment. Jim and I meet with Scott Aycock this next Monday to discuss next steps so if I could have your thoughts by Monday noon that would be awesome.



Gary Asbridge
District Ranger

Forest Service
Ochoco National Forest, Paulina Ranger District

p: 541-416-6449

c: (b)(6)

f: 541-416-6695

gasbridge@fs.fed.us

3160 NE Third Street
Prineville, OR 97754

www.fs.fed.us



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From: Mickelson, Jennifer -FS
Sent: Fri, 18 May 2018 15:39:47 +0000
To: Beaupre, James - FS;Borghi, Dino -FS
Subject: RE: Critical Habitat Layer
Attachments: stmcr_chf1.shx, stmcr_chf1.dbf, stmcr_chf1.prj, stmcr_chf1.sbn, stmcr_chf1.sbx, stmcr_chf1.shp

Hi Jim/Dino!

Here's the layer that I have. It comes from NOAA fisheries website, and sometimes it seems to be just off a little from our layers (shifted). You may be able to fix that Dino? Take a look and let me know what you think. Thanks!



Jennifer Mickelson
Fisheries Biologist

Forest Service
Ochoco National Forest, Lookout Mountain RD
Crooked River National Grassland

Phone: 541-416-6485
jmickelson@fs.fed.us

3160 NE 3rd Street
Prineville, OR 97754

www.fs.fed.us



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From: Beaupre, James - FS
Sent: Tuesday, May 15, 2018 9:31 AM
To: Mickelson, Jennifer -FS <jmickelson@fs.fed.us>
Subject: Critical Habitat Layer

Howdy,

Dino just reminded me that he's looking for the correct critical habitat layer for the trails strategy mapping project...



Jim Beaupre
Recreation/Lands/Special Uses Staff

Forest Service
Ochoco National Forest

p: 541-416-6542
f: 541-416-6695
jbeaupre@fs.fed.us

3160 NE Third Street
Prineville, OR 97754

www.fs.fed.us



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OTSG presentation to Forest Service 2/7/19

+

In attendance: Gary, Kim, Mary, Darlene, Monty (USFS), Karl, Duane, Jim, Chris (USFS), Jamie, Shane (USFS), Greg Jackle (ODFW) in for Sarah Gregory, Kevin Keown (USFS)

Gary - How this came about: 3.5-4 years ago, COTA presented the FS with a pretty comprehensive mtb proposal. Our forest supervisor, Slater, and I talked about this, but what Stacey (supervisor) wanted was to use this as a springboard to look into a sustainable trails network from a user-led perspective. We know what happened on the Deschutes, we are always playing catch up. We know that people are continuing to come to the Ochocos, so we wanted to get out ahead of that. FS wanted a group made up of users to devise a sustainable trails network proposal that the FS could run with and look at and implement. We did not want that to be a FS-led process, we wanted it to be user-led, which is where the Chamber got involved. Chamber receives a lot of interest related to recreation, so Casey saw this as a perfect fit for the Chamber, since they are promoting tourism/economic development. So they agreed to be the initial facilitator/fiscal agent. We did that so this was not a FS led process. Started ~18 months to two years ago.

Kim - Path to collaboration was, at first, pretty rocking. Including yelling. There was a lot of conflict re: Lookout Mtn and Independence Mine. In spite of that, the group had a pretty easy time developing a mission and vision statement, because we recognize the benefits - economic, health, tourism - that make Prineville a better place to live. We noticed that usage is growing, and that if we don't decide where to put it, we will have people going places that we don't want/destruction. Over a course of several months, we discussed the types of experiences that each user group wanted. For example, MTBers wanted close to town, and a variety of flowy/challenging trails. All groups wanted loops and the ability to self select a trail where they wouldn't encounter other user types. Group had an epiphany - there are so many bikes on Lookout Mtn because there is nowhere else for them to ride that gives them the experience that they want. This presented an interesting point - the way to get to a win-win for everyone was to look elsewhere. Realized that Lookout was to be dealt with later.

Equestrians have limited camps/official trails. Hikers have some nice out-backs, but limited options for loops. With those concepts in mind, we started putting lines on the map. We met with specialists, who gave some information related to issues with trails and resource conflicts. Using that input, we refined lines on the map, and took it to the community. Community got to vote with dots, gave input, and then we refined again. The final maps (and the handout) are the result of that. You'll notice that some are separated trails, and some are combined trails. These are gestures, they are not precise. Other than equestrian trails, many are not GPSed. We expect that there will be changes, fine tuning, and some trails or sections will be removed entirely.

Shane - Out of curiosity, what are some of the things you heard from the community?

Kim - "when can we start"?

Darlene - there were two people who were adamantly opposed, one has since changed his mind. Other person, not sure where she landed on it. Overall consensus of the community was very favorable. A common theme is that people are worried about crowding and the loss of their visitor experience. But the reality is that they are coming anyway, so let's have a plan.

Duane - most people I talked to were very positive about it. Many folks wanted to get out and start helping with trail work. There were about 100 people there all together. There were some OHV folks who wanted no new trails, but more OHV access.

Shane - did you have any "a-ha" moments? Or make adjustments?

Duane - We did make adjustments. Kim - seeing their votes helped us adjust our priorities. It was help to know what people wanted most.

Karl - mostly listened during the public meeting, overall impression was very positive. Lived on the west side of Bend for 20+ years has seen the overuse and catching up on the Deschutes. Looking into this process from the outside has been positive, and he's excited to see this proactive work. Thinks this group has been doing a good job creating a model that could be used in the future.

Kim - It's worth saying that people who are passionate about trails were the folks involved. Not all voices were representative.

What's next? Let's look at trails on the map.

MTBers - identified multiple areas, open to prioritizing and starting with one or a few. Not expecting all at once. Scotty Creek and Cougar already have roads. Rehabbing the Potlid Trail. Lemon Creek - nothing existing there, but road to the top and close to town. On top of that, a few other trails - one is a loop going from Bandit Springs to Walton Lake. Talked about developing XC ski trails into summer trails.

Chris - Are the three areas vastly different? Travis - similar experience, shuttleable, but we want optional uphill travel route as well. Range of technical ability trails packed within one area.

Darlene - We do want to build on the RTP grant money that we already have to rehab those trails. Looking at if we can consolidate some of the biking to those 3 or 4 areas, this will give riders what they want and we can leave the rest of the forest for habitat, etc.

Travis - people are always going to ride Lookout, it's a very unique experience to Oregon. But by offering this kind of trail system experience, the majority of mountain bikers will go here instead.

Kim - Theme for hikers is connecting loops. Black Mtn loops connect existing trails. Trails around Mill Creek would also create backpacking and horsepacking loops. Most hiking stuff is meant to connect other existing trails.

Duane - For equestrians, trails are built around the horse camps. A longer riding system and loops. Increasing infrastructure for overnight packing trips. Connecting user-created trails and FS roads to create loop hikes. With Lookout, we've come to a compromise to get rid of that pinch point with equestrians and MTBers. Leaves bikers open to ride that trail and eliminates the conflict. Allen Creek - a couple of BCH folks went out and GPSed some existing cow trails, would just require signage. A big point to mention is that there will be some designated trails with a primary user group in mind, and people will need to respect that.

Kim - as we approach this - is your vision that it will be one NEPA, or NEPA in stages?

Shane - I want to have that conversation with the staff about their ideas. Initial reaction is that the Ochoco Summit was a huge project done all at once. I am reluctant to go that direction. Our capacity to implement something at that scale in a reasonable amount of time is not high, even with help. Planning can become stale over the course of a decade. Finding the right scale is key. What would it look like to segment this? How would we prioritize? This creates some challenges. On the other hand, why not take a look at the cumulative impact, scope, scale? There is an interest in this group by staying connected - thank you. What could make some sense for us, what's the right bite? I want to start off with a solid win. We need a win working with OHA and ODFW. We need something that will sound good in Salem. We start with something that we can be successful with. If the first one out of the gate is difficult, untenable, this could undermine trust with a variety of groups. Finding that first place for us to work is critical.

Kim - what criteria would you use?

Shane - None of it's easy. From my sociopolitical perspective, I'd like to have a place that we collectively feel like we're not having effects on our nongame and big game populations. Wants to make sure a group like OHA is happy. What's the right scope and scale for us to be thinking about? I'd like to see representatives from ODFW and OHA to feel comfortable with the decision. If you look broadly - they may be thinking about migration corridor, summer range, winter range, etc. So, that's a criterion.

Shane - We need something that makes sense for the community and infrastructure needs. Gary brought it up in the open - he's spent a lot of time on the Deschutes, and they have been chasing and chasing impacts over there. From a big game standpoint, that's winter range over there and its hammered. This is a chance with the group like this to get out in front. So the question is - what does getting out in front mean? What's the horizon we're thinking about here? Are we planning for what we have, or what we think we're going to have? Is the infrastructure sitting on the landscape capable of handling the type of use we are going to see in 10 years? Are we going to need to toilets etc.? When we compartmentalize it and see where to start,

infrastructure is an important piece that we are going to have to consider. Overall, we should consider chopping it up into pieces, to make it easier for ourselves.

Shane - I think this is outstanding, the collaboration and the product. The "collaboration forest restoration act" that passed 10 years ago really changed the way that the agency interacts with the community. We used to come up with proposals, and then went out into the community. Used to not really care about community feedback since we had our own ideas. We used to have a preferred alternative. High interest in avoiding lawsuits prior to the CFRA. The CFRA taught folks in community how their public lands are being managed and used, helped teach the agency that the collab orgs belong to the community, not the agency. This helps us determine where there is strong community support for the proposal, and see what there is interest for. This proposal has been vetted with all of the non-motorized user groups in Crook County. We are going to spend taxpayer money for planning, so it's really valuable to have a proposal like this that already has a lot of stakeholder group support.

Shane - re: planning - we recognize that there's a need to invest. Jim and Kent, who have been leading the rec program, are basically being asked to do the impossible. We recognized that, which is why we hired Chris, who will work directly with me and the user groups. He will work to elevate the status of recreation on the Ochoco and the Grassland. We've made the investment and we will see progress. In fact, we had a discussion about taking this project to Portland to discuss with our director and program manager, and to advocate for some of the limited recreation funds in Oregon and Washington. If we can get through planning with the right size, right plan, etc., getting things implemented on the ground is not going to be the most difficult part. I am super excited about this, and we'll continue to coalesce around this. What does a sign plan look like for this? Where will we put our infrastructure? How will DYF contribute to this effort? How can that feed into what Chris will do to establish a trails crew in the forest? How will that cascade into Wilderness? There is a lot of really exciting stuff that comes from this, which makes it difficult to reign ourselves in and figure out what's next.

Darlene - What about a timeline? When do we get to know how to proceed? How do we support this moving forward?

Duane - We are going to need some of that information as we develop our strategic plan.

Shane - strategic plan is a different beast and touches many of the things that we are talking about. FS are tacticians. We have to do a couple of things:

1. Put some thought into it with FS folks, get a sense from a resource standpoint re: right scope and scale, where we can get that win.
2. Group will have to get together and decide what we want to prioritize - balancing the group's priorities and finding the easy win.

Shane - other thing that's clear is that we have a motorized group that is not happy right now. They are also tax paying citizens. There are parts of Ochoco Summit that were also about rehabilitation of user-created trails. What is the narrative/conversation with the OHV folks that

says this is a significant investment taxpayer time and money, but we are walking away from OHV plan? I would guess that you all haven't put in tons of time re: where OHVs already allowed? Where are the easy wins for them? Consider the optics of this. Those are some of the things that we are going to need to be thinking about - we can't ignore them. Litigation, appeals, objections, scoping, collaboration are all ways that the community interacts with the agency. That's why it's important to have groups like ODFW and OHA involved. There are still folks who are not at the table.

Darlene - how soon will some of this happen? When can you do that initial analysis so we can get some feedback?

Chris - one thing we might suggest is getting some priorities from OTSG. Then we can start engaging some of the folks on our staff related to those areas. That could make this a little easier. Getting some priorities in your eyes.

Shane - think about that area that you collectively agree "we would like them to look at this area first".

Kim - endurance trails may not be the best place to start.

Shane - given the money that we get, we don't typically get the right kind of money to use on this type of project. I would like to go into the area, and do the whole thing including infrastructure so we don't have to go back to it. What I will commit to is that this late winter Chris and I will be heading to the regional office for a presentation, perhaps bringing one of two of you with us, to represent this project and advocate for funding. We want to pick the right one to start with that makes sense for all of you and can demonstrate the win.

Darlene - our priorities may not be the easiest win. So we can't necessarily make that decision without some initial review from the FS.

Travis - the example is Potlid overlapping with elk habitat. We didn't know about that before talking with the FS. If we had that information it would make it easier.

Shane - this is an assembled group of folks that can identify the areas with a high degree of interest first. It may end up that we go with your second priority if that's easier. We need seed money. 2019 money is already out, which means we have little chance to influence that. The real likelihood is that we could get started with a real significant effort in 2020. There are things that we will be able to chip away at. But we will need a lot more money from region to get going - remember that we are competing with the Deschutes, Hood, Okanogan-Wenatchee, etc. We have more trees than people on this forest, so we will have to go make a pitch and this work will help us tremendously. I'm optimistic that we'll be successful there. So the question for this group is what can OTSG do in the meantime? We are happy to offer ideas. Once we get through planning - finding money to implement is never difficult with organizations like this involved. Finding money for planning is difficult.

Travis - if we could find money for planning would that help?

Shane - absolutely.

Darlene - emphasizing from MTB perspective, a network is what we need. We currently have disconnected options.

Shane - The case for the work is strong. Part of it is us showing up and making a pitch. They have 17 units across Oregon and Washington to balance. We have this strong community support. This forest is currently looked at as a wild horse forest, small timber production, small connection to torrefaction. Not really a rec forest. There is an easy case to be made, we just have to make it.

Gary asked if regular businesses were present at community meeting? Like the owner of the 7/11 etc.?

Darlene - Not necessarily. But the Chamber Board did approve a grant to OTSG, which shows business support. And the County Court liked our plan.

Shane - The Natural Resources Committee is a more diverse group of 9 then I initially could see. County Court is looking seriously at rec \$.

Darlene - already have one RTP grant. Ready to apply for another one.

Duane - if we come up with a few priority areas, will we be able to do a pre-field review of those locations?

Shane - absolutely, yes. That would be helpful.

Kim - But how big of a chunk?

Shane - we can help with that. There are lots of different ways to do it. We'll look at sub-watersheds or sub-sub-watersheds. The impacts of work that we do don't align with human use patterns. There are lots of ways to do that. We can just bring someone in to have this discussion.

Kevin Keown - USFS NR staff, works in planning. To give an idea re: how soon can we start? Our FY 19 program is developed and filled for planning at the moment. So this would at least start in FY 20, at the earliest.

Monty - re: compartmentalizing your priorities. We look at cumulative effects that we really look at. Human use doesn't always replicate natural systems. We can look at all of the projects in that system.

Shane - We could try to bring in a sub-watershed map or something?

Darlene - OTSG needs some blocks or some way to delineate. To look at things in zones instead would be helpful.

Monty - We also have fairly new groups to this group like ODFW and OHA, this would give them the opportunity to put a pencil to paper and give their input.

Darlene - likes the zone idea, that also includes input from other groups. To identify potential conflict etc.

Shane - one thing to consider to be successful - how we approach the work across the forest as it continues. As we lean more into this, the work around the public land will continue, this will contain work in other areas. It will be easy for us to work ad-hoc. Remember, it's about developing trust in the community, to show how we will collectively work together. Once we have a pattern on how we will march across the landscape, we'll have to look within that first zone and see if there is anything we can do without NEPA. There might be something we could move on earlier while we work through planning. We might take little pieces of it out and do Categorical Exclusions. This would all be part of this work that we're doing - we want it all to be wrapped together in a way that people understand. This will make it easier to address cumulative effects on things like deer, elk, upland birds, etc. Staying focused on one place is important but not required, we may be able to do little pieces here and there.

Shane - This is a lot of work, and adds a huge amount of value. Thank you.

Chris - can't understate the value of this as a tool when we go to region to ask for more money. In the meantime, OTSG can figure out what to do to move forward regardless of the agency.

SCROLL TO NEXT 2 PAGES FOR MEETING PICS





Ochoco Trails Strategy Group

April 2, 2019 11:15a – 1:15p

Prineville – Crook County Chamber of Commerce
185 NE 10th St, Prineville, OR

Notes

11:15 – 11:20a Welcome and Introductions

- New participants?

Attending: Ruth and Duane Miller, Mary Beyer, Darlene Henderson, Sarah Carver, Kit Dickey, Kim McCarrel, Bruce Miller

Facilitator: Scott Aycock

11:20 – 11:30 Catch-Up: Review Outcomes of March 5 Meeting

- Outcomes and Action Items

A_Notes

Anything more on the R6 visit? No.

BJ Westlund visit will be Kim, Kim D, Kit, Duane, Stan - Tuesday the 9th at 11 in Bend. Maybe Darlene.

Meeting in Portland last Monday with Blumenauer and Wyden – called in a bunch of conservation groups. Kim submitted comments. What lands do you want protected next? Ochocos was on the list for a bunch of people – in relation to the National Recreation Area proposal.

Letter to sign re: Ochoco as an emerging recreation Forest and supporting more funding. Letter will be from OTSG for Wyden and Merkley to sign and send to R6.

*Unsure who was taking this project on?

Backcountry Horsemen \$2K was approved!

11:30 – 12:00p OTSG Strategic Plan

- Review Outline and Questions
- Review Draft Vision and Mission Statements
- Discuss Objectives/Strategies

B_Strategic Plan Outline and Questions

The group used Scott's guide to create the Vision, Mission, and Objectives/Strategies for the draft Strategic Plan – see the attachment.

*Scott to write up the outcomes and put "draft" all over it.

12:00 – 12:25

Forest Service Updates

- Overlay process – opportunities to map other values
- Low hanging fruit (e.g. signage, CEs, etc.)
- Pre-field review timing

Scott shared the updates from the Forest Service:

- The FS has received the Ranger's approval and agreement to dedicate some specialist time to review the OTSG proposal map and give the initial 30,000 foot feedback using the watershed map layer as the main baseline.
- Chris Joosen is scheduling time with all the District specialists to give Wildlife, Invasive-Botany, Fisheries, Aquatics, Archaeology, Soils, etc. feedback and comments on the proposed map.
- Jim, Monty, and Chris will take those comments and overlay concerns on the map to recommend some areas to the OTSG that would be good to prioritize for implementing proposals and/or be considered as what we have called "low hanging fruit".

*Scott to ask for Chris' clarification on when they will provide their feedback based on other values/things they manage for. Tell them thank you for doing this. The OTSG eagerly awaits.

Keep in mind they have to live all of this process and uncertainty all the time.

Kim – have Darlene be our bulldog. She's good at it!

12:25-12:35

Funding Update

C_Funding Matrix

The funding matrix was updated to include the \$2K from BCH.

12:35– 12:55

April 5 TFFF Visit Prep

- Timing change: 11-1:00
- Agenda/program
- Participants
- Logistics

Serving them a "community meal".

*Scott to send the TFFF Community Building Approach.

Attending: Mary, Darlene, Sarah, Kit, Kim, Duane and Ruth, someone from the FS – Chris Joosen?

I emphasized the process and values part of their work. We talked about vets, disabled community, challenges engaging racial/ethnic minorities, etc.

Great outdoors in Central OR – provides low income people with a recreation opportunity.

What are the needs they have to get their work done?

- Facilitation
- Volunteer development
- Outreach tools
- DEI

Open with a welcome and an ice breaker – memorable recreation experience that meant something to you.

12:55– 1:05 Crooked River National Grasslands

- Any updates on Smith Rock State Park Plan process?
- Next steps

Kim sent an email to Robin Wilcox, facilitator for the Smith Rock Master Plan. Told her we wanted to put in a bike trail to allow skull hollow bike access. She thought that was a great idea and it's about time to engage with the adjacent landowners.

Kit Koehler, CRNG – He is supportive of more trails out of Skull Hollow. His comment was that some folks want the equestrian trails used for the Grizzly Mtn. Endurance rides to be dedicated trails. Others said that's boring and there should be more loops close to Skull Hollow.

Discussed having separate trails for bikes and equestrians. OTSG members liked that idea. New trails for bicyclists with equestrian support and then convert old trails for equestrians (since mtn bikers have more resources to build trail than the equestrians do).

1:05 – 1:15 Next Meeting and Next Steps

- Next meeting is May 7; TFFF visit is April 5

Debrief TFFF; review Strat Plan; FS updates/feedback

Ochoco Trails Strategy Group

June 4, 2019 11:15a – 1:15p

Prineville – Crook County Chamber of Commerce
185 NE 10th St, Prineville, OR

Agenda

Attending: Scott Aycock, Rika Ayotte, Amy Jensen (DYF Marketing And Events Coordinator), Kit Dickey, Kim McCarrel, Stan Shepardson, Greg Jackel (District Wildlife Biologist), Darlene Henderson, Sarah Carver, Barbara Smith (Retired Forest Service Rec/Backcountry Horsemen), Jim Beaupre, Jamie Dawson, Karl Findling, Bruce Williams, Monty Gregg.

We had several new participants join us:

- Amy Jensen will be helping cover for Rika while she is on maternity leave
- Greg Jackel will be participating with USFS personnel in their “high level review” of the OTSG proposal
- Barbara Smith will participate as she can going forward.

*Scott to add all three to the email list.

11:15 – 11:20a Welcome and Introductions
- New participants?

11:20 – 11:30 Catch-Up: Review Outcomes of May7 Meeting
- Outcomes and Action Items

At the last meeting:

- *Rika noted that she would be proposing funding to Travel OR – hearing more about that next.*
- *Kim Daniels presented on the EPA Rural Community Economy grant and that the Chamber would be applying for stuff related to connecting downtown to the surrounding natural environment.*
- *Scott noted that TFFF visit went well and that he would be following up with them. Returning to this next on the agenda.*
- *Jim noted that he would be sending a crew up to Lookout Mtn to scout out the reroute.*

Update: Jim stated that he will actually be will be heading up there June 17, 18, and 19. Snow slowed them down. He will send an invite to the group.

Also at the last meeting:

- *The group mentioned Endurance Trails, Dry Creek Horse Camp, Allen Creek Horse Camp as potential CE trails projects.*

Update: Noted that those lower hanging fruits only benefit equestrian. So need to see some bike trails.

- *At the last meeting, members noted that they were to meet with the Crook Co NR Committee the day after our meeting – how did that go?*

It went very well. Invited any of them to participate that were interested. They were well received; had good questions. If they don't come it means we're fine.

- *We finalized the Strategic Plan Vision and Mission, did some work on Strategic Objectives, and started brainstorming actions.*
- *We received a report that the RS review of our proposal had been delayed. They also noted that they are having lots of conversations with R6 on the recreation aspects of the Ochoco and the need to show some successes soon.*

Updates:

Next Thursday is the first rounds of meetings. Going to happen over the next three weeks. Jim will invite Greg and Sarah to come in and discuss as well.

Each specialist will send an email to Jim and he will work to make something out of that. Kit asked for not just barriers but also solutions to help mitigate issues.

Monty talked to Chris J and a lot of their feedback and input relies on ODF&W. Scott asked - what about USF&WS? Some anadromous fish up by Potlid, wolves are indeed coming through. They are still regulatory on wolves in this part of the system.

Greg noted that they have to address when elk are displaced from FS land to private land. Monty noted that those are cumulative effects. We are trying to front load that process and ID the kind of effect that's going to have.

Greg noted that ODF&W is starting a project re: habitat use and elk – collaring them. cursory knowledge is that right now elk are scattered across most of "that area" and females are having their calves. Herd back up late summer. Nutrition quality gets less and less throughout the summer. Late July/Aug/early Sept. Timeframe is really critical. Putting on as much fat as they can to survive the winter. Trying to increase the security areas. Its tough b/c there are a lot of roads on the Ochocos. There is much better tech now for getting good, localized elk data. Have this info for deer, but not elk yet. Have winter range and have models to predict where these security areas are likely to be.

Greg – also put out traffic counters. Collect baseline data on trail use. Doesn't differentiate between types of users. Do have cameras they can put out as well.

Karl noted that they like the use of these cameras.

Key issue is if you build these trails how are you going to monitor/enforce it? Especially for those with seasonal closures.

Karl – seems to be happening well in the Millican OHV area.

Jim- he heard some comparisons to Ochoco Summit. Travel mgmt rules closed the area to OHV while this sorts out. That's not the case for hiking, biking, equestrian. This project actually will help manage the use towards certain areas, so it can have a positive affect on wildlife.

Last meeting - discussed the Regional Office visit on May 15 and 16. Did anyone attend?

Updates:

Went well with Michelle Mitchell... heard good things from the Supervisors. The trip that Shane and Chris went to the RO seeking money was good but no \$ yet.

Kim – what % of those at R6 understand that rec is providing more \$ than timber etc.? Totally understood there but not so much at USDA/senior levels. DC doesn't get it.

Also, regarding the meetings with BJ and Jacob for Wyden and Merkley. Jacob was all over it. BJ was more passive. What about Walden? There was discussion. Karl and Duane have connections.

Last meeting - Discussed the Crooked River National Grassland and how there was growing agreement to put more trails in around Skull Hollow rather than Grizzly area. Also, noted agreement around establishing new mtn biking trails in order to revert existing ones back to equestrian emphasis.

Updates:

Jim – has some lines from Kim re: trails. Jim and Darlene are working to get the Redmond and Madras COTA groups to all come together on this. General agreement on what we are talking about but Darlene expressed concerns. As long as there are good additions for bikes she is ok.

RTP grant is due June 15. Not positive if they are going to apply this year or next. Few more things to figure out. Skull Hollow area.

Kim – when you stay at Cyrus horse camp there are some terrific loops to do. If you don't know about them the riding is limited. Kim gave Jim those connector trails to create those shortened loops.

A_Notes

11:30-11:50

Funding Updates

- Travel OR Proposal – Rika

B_OTSG Slide Deck for TO

Rika – Travel OR is giving us \$7,500 this year. Really excited about all the work we are doing. So, we have put \$15K in the kitty over the last 6 months – folks are excited about the work we are doing. Reason folks are so excited is b/c it's happening in a more rural context. Rika shared the initial pitch deck with Scott, Kim, Darlene. Came out of stuff that this group had already put together. Proposed seeking funding for continuing facilitation for strategic planning and furthering of the trails proposal. Also asked for funds connected to an on-the-ground "inaugural project". Rika loosely proposed Lookout Mtn. b/c it's very sexy. Hoping that works out.

Go to National Forest Foundation – MAP grant – coming up next Friday. Plan is to earmark portion of Travel OR and 1:1 match with NFF. Travel OR also requires 1:1 match. Looks good for NFF.

- TFFF Proposal - Scott

C_Updated Budget-Funding Matrix

We are discussing \$10,000 for staffing and some funding to help support group projects. Most likely for some type of community engagement activities and/or volunteer engagement?

DYF updates:

Signing the contract on Travel OR prior to Rika leaving on July 1st (October 1 return; expecting to be totally out of the office). Will be at the Trails Summit in Roseburg October 3-4. Full time or part-time in October and then back full time in November. NFF – will get notified after Rika leaves. Amy will be keeping an eye out for that funding. Will be back in time for NFF money to flow. Amy will pay invoices to COIC.

If other uses for the funding that we currently have.... Or if we're funded by NFF and there is a need to expedite that on-the-ground trail work we will work directly with Amy. Re: strategic stuff – don't necessarily need them on that. Just move forward as planned and DFY will go forward as the fiscal agent. Will take a little bit of a break on seeking funding.

Original proposal to Travel OR asked for \$15k. \$5k to do a video piece on this group and the project. Didn't get that funding but she is going to work on convincing them to do it anyway out of a different pot.

*make Amy an administrator of the OTSG FB page?

Jim left us with a sub-watershed map – way to look at the proposal through NEPA. Also has the elk security map.

Who is the keeper of our maps? Duane has a hard copy.

11:50 – 12:30p

OTSG Strategic Plan

- Review progress at last meeting
- Complete Actions and Indicators

D_Revised Strategic Plan Outline and Questions

See updated plan for revisions.

12:30 – 12:50

Forest Service Updates

- High-level proposal review update
- Other updates

This item was covered above.

- 12:50– 1:05 Crooked River National Grasslands
- COTA Update
 - Next steps

This item was covered above.

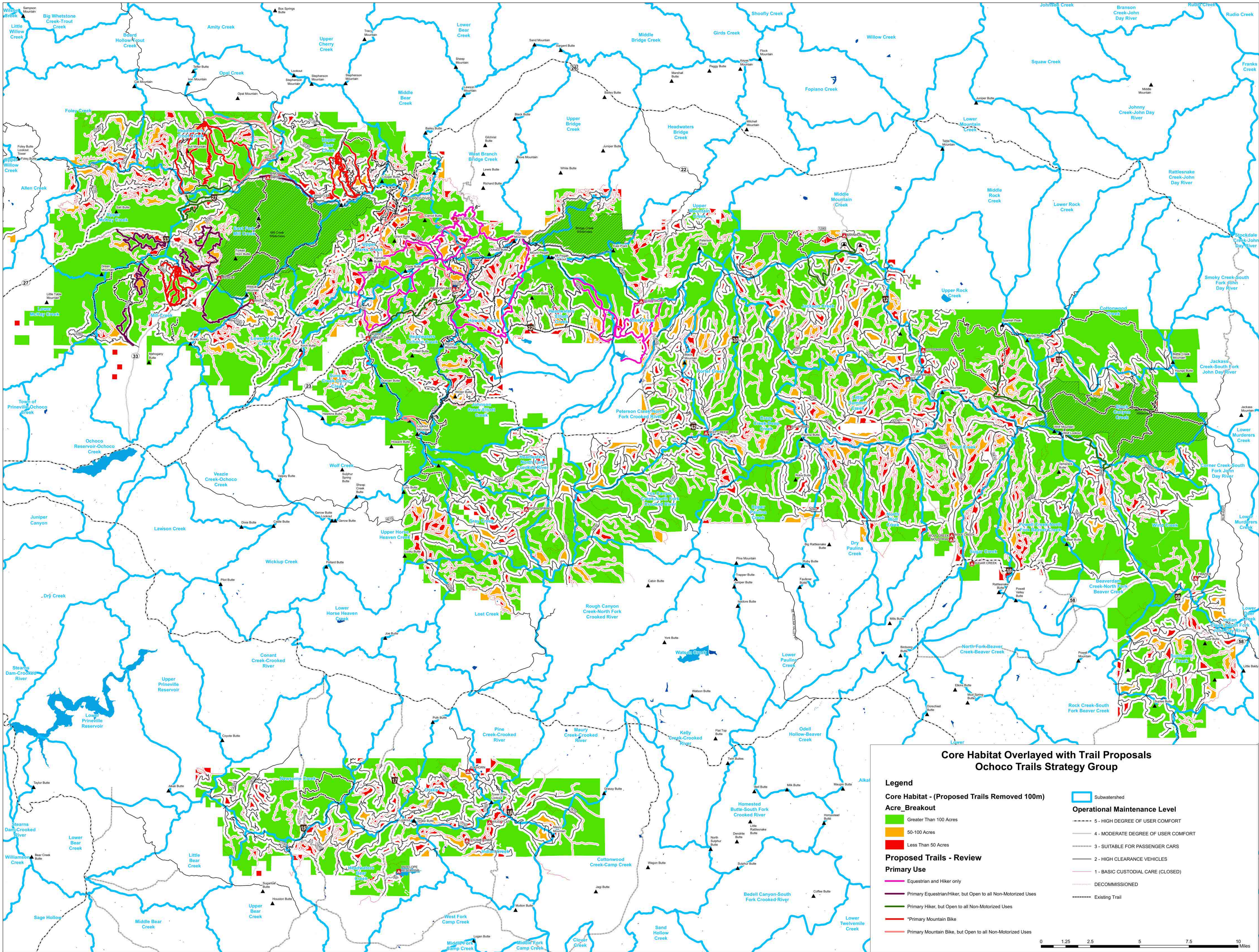
- 1:05 – 1:15 Next Meeting and Next Steps
- Next meeting is June 4

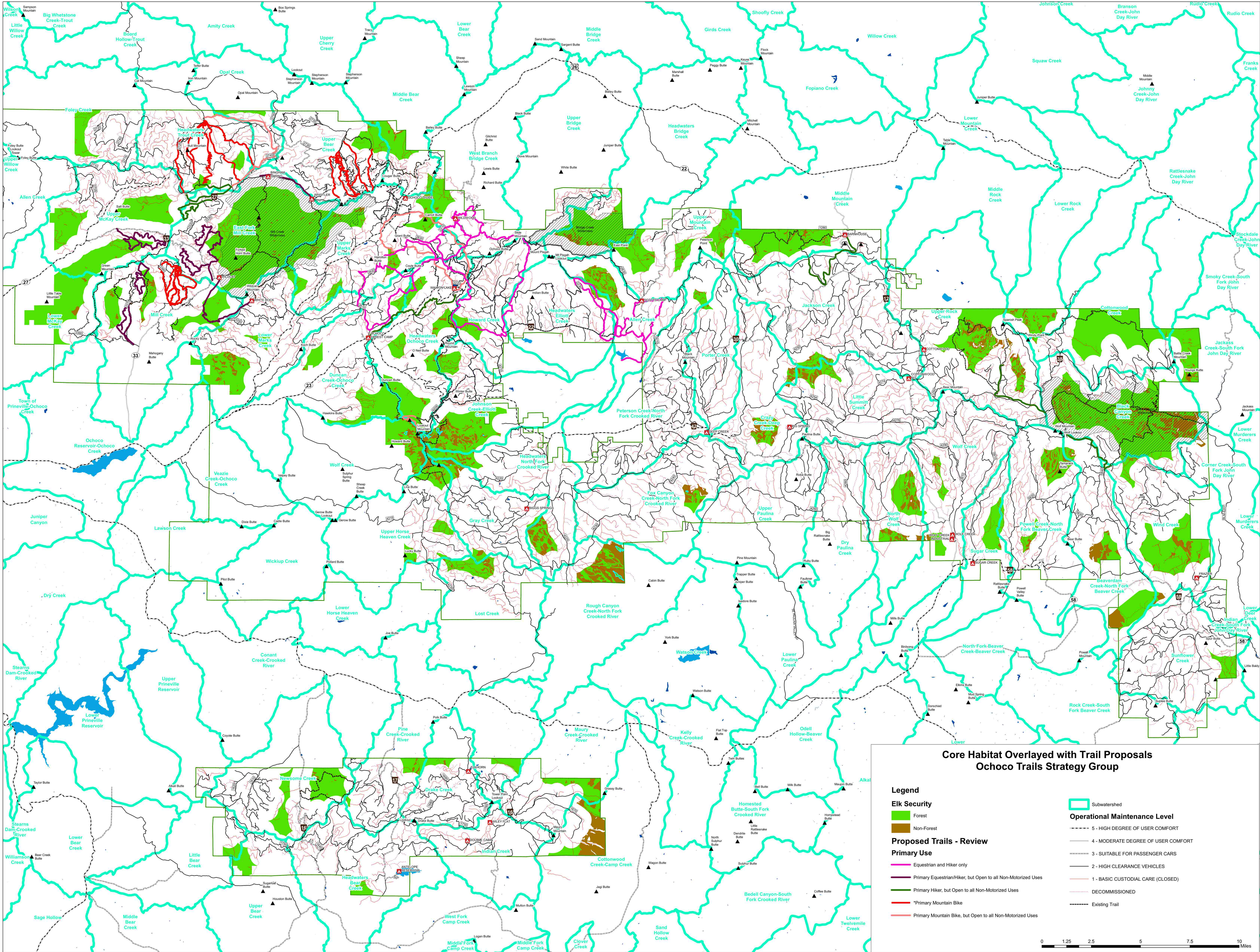
*We confirmed that we will have the July 2 meeting and continue the Strategic plan process

*Potentially have a committee meeting in July to tee up final strat plan for August

*Get and distribute the DTC operating manual.

*Scott to structure up remaining strat plan components to “fill in”.





Ochoco Trails Strategy Group Proposal – Pre-NEPA engagement meeting – ODFW and USFS

July 11 2019

Ochoco National Forest Supervisors Office – Prineville

Attendees: USFS – Kevin Keown, Chris Joosens, Monty Gregg, Robbie Piehl, Jim Beaupre, Andrew Passarelli; ODFW – Greg Jackle, Sara Gregory

Purpose: To view and discuss collectively the potential proposed OTSG non-motorized trails, have questions answered or clarified, highlight resource and socio-political concerns, and provide feedback to the recreation staff to relay to OTSG as necessary.

Discussion/ Thoughts:

- ODFW initially wary about scale and overall size of complete trail package
- Is there potential to implement in a phased approach?
 - Utilizing developed thresholds and monitoring to determine recreational use as well as wildlife behavior
 - What adaptive management opportunities exist?
 - What are the trigger points for future development?
- What events will be allowed on these trails?
- Concerns around lack of existing recreational infrastructure (staging areas, campgrounds, parking, trailheads, etc.)
 - Because some trails are remote, do they become too far for day trips?
 - Increased use on existing infrastructure potential issue
 - Is the current infrastructure provided adequate now, or into the future?
- Concern from ODFW and USFS wildlife folks about how this is analyzed from a NEPA perspective
 - Concern about not analyzing it as 1 project due to cumulative effects of similar actions
 - Jim B. described there may be some trails that make sense to approach with a CE due to lack of complexity, immediate safety issues, on existing disturbance, etc., and others that make sense to group into watershed/subwatersheds and analyze with an EA.
 - Important to distinguish between ground disturbance effects and volume of use effects
 - Important to include in the analyses what use is acceptable on each trail, including number and type of events allowed
- ODFW concerned about connectivity of wildlife habitat as the volume of use increases
- ODFW and USFS wildlife staff are in favor of keeping the Brush Creek area and Maury's secure from a wildlife perspective, and are happy that those opportunities are not being pursued by OTSG.
- What opportunities exist for seasonal restrictions on trails that occur within designated winter range? What if the trail is out of winter range but road access to the trail/trailhead is blocked by a seasonal restriction, does the trail receive this same closure?

Trails Comments/Notes:

- ODFW and USFS wildlife staff concerned about additional trail construction and increased use in Cougar/Potlid area and Scotty area as these areas have been identified as priority habitats for restoration for elk and mule deer. Improving habitat conditions in these areas helps to reduce damage to private lands adjacent to the Forest, and keep big game on federal lands for recreational hunting opportunities.
 - Trail alignment, juxtaposition, and spacing on the landscape creates a large footprint of disturbance for wildlife. Trail would be better if it was less sprawling and more compact, potentially with braided trails.
 - Management of existing trails in these areas (Cougar, Scotty, and Potlid) have shifted to now include mountain bike use. Is the use on these trails such that additional trails are needed in these areas at this time?
- ODFW and USFS wildlife staff indicated they understood the need for developed horse trails around the various horse camps
- Jim B. described that the endurance ride trail system is primarily located on open-roads
- Recreational trails associated with areas around Brennan Palisades and Lemon Creek seem to offer opportunities close to town, in areas with existing disturbance, where some infrastructure exists currently, that are compact and minimize impacts to wildlife
 - This area is impacted by a seasonal closure (winter range)
- The Lookout Mountain proposed trail is primarily a safety concern with user-conflict between horseback riders and mountain bikers.

Fine Tuning: There is some fine tuning from a wildlife perspective on various trail systems in an attempt to minimize impacts to the wildlife resource and habitats that was touched upon during the meeting, but was not an in-depth discussion where actual re-routes were proposed.

- Trail #1: Is there an opportunity to use the road as the trail? Is this trail necessary? Should use be discouraged in this area due to poor road conditions?
- Trail #2: Concern about alignment and fragmentation, trail notes appear that it has flexibility in location on the ground, possible to modify route onto areas already receiving disturbance or can this segment be eliminated?
- Trail #3: Appears to connect with motorized green mountain trail system, potential user conflict, and potential for breach and possible continuation of motorized route
- Trail # 8: goes through security habitat, can the route be modified to be closer to open roads?
- Trail #9: concerned about connectivity issues with security habitat, possible to modify route onto areas already receiving disturbance or can this segment be eliminated?

Next Steps:

- USFS rec staff will collect and combine input from various resource areas on the Forest
 - Relay information gathered to OTSG at August meeting
- ODFW expressed interest in getting out to the field on a collective field trip with USFS staff to view some of the locations of the proposed trail systems

From: [Joosen, Christopher -FS](#)
To: [Lund, Cathy A -FS](#); [Passarelli, Andrew M -FS](#); [Beaupre, James - FS](#); [Gregg, Monty -FS](#)
Cc: [Keown, Kevin -FS](#); [Jeffries, Shane -FS](#)
Subject: Highlighted preliminary OTSG Project area focus map
Date: Friday, August 9, 2019 8:09:05 AM
Attachments: [Highlighted preliminary OTSG Project area focus map.jpg](#)
[image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)

All, Kevin and I spent some time reviewing the Elk Security, Watershed and MA layers on the OTSG trail proposal. In addition, we utilized Monty's maps regarding wildlife improvement areas as well as core habitat and came up with the attached map with the highlighted boundary. Let me know what you think. Chris



Christopher Joosen
Recreation, Wilderness and Special Uses Staff Officer

Forest Service
Ochoco National Forest & Crooked River
National Grassland, Supervisor's Office

Office: 541-416-6516

Cell: (b)(6)

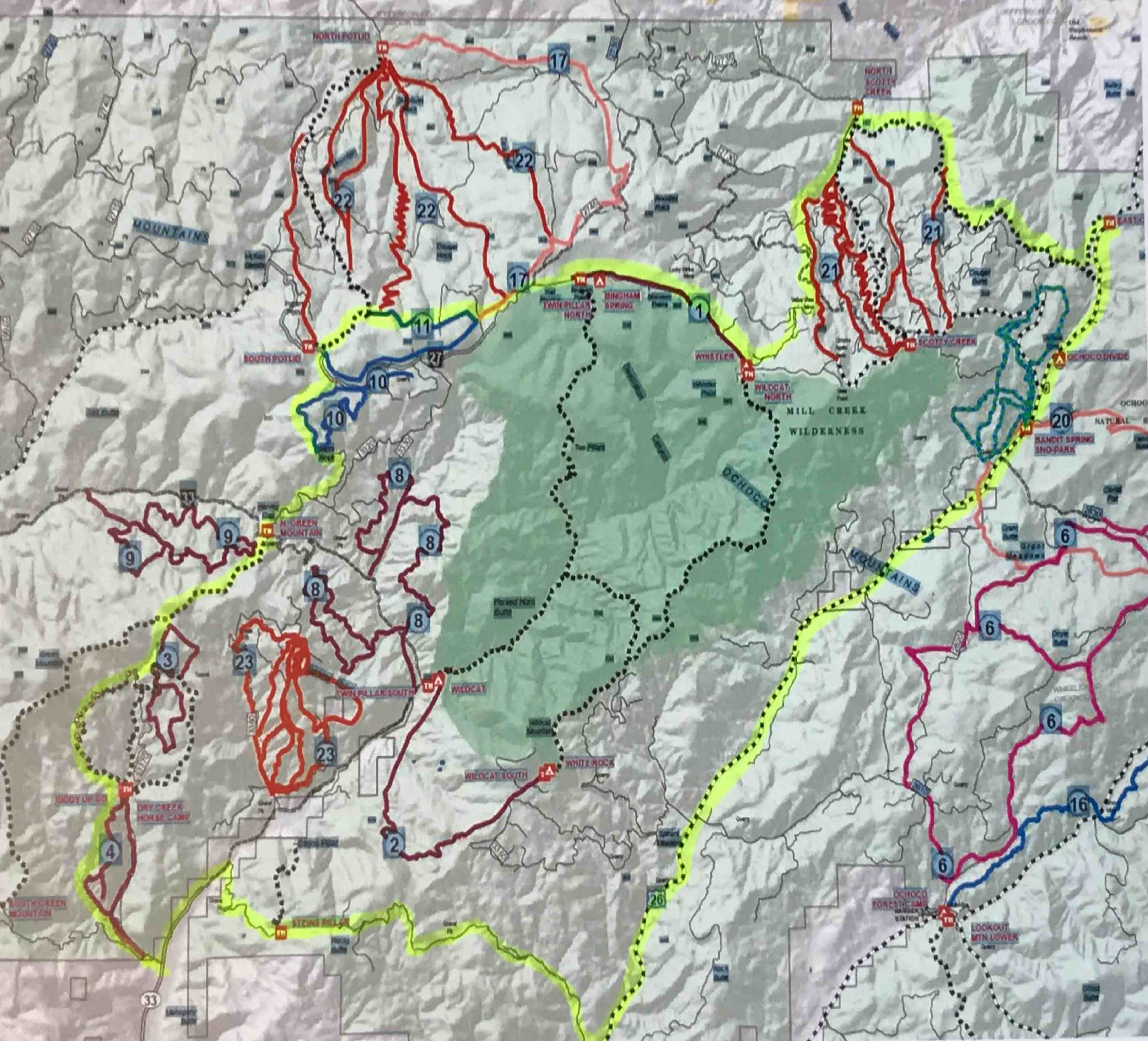
christopher.joosen@usda.gov

3160 NE Third Street
Prineville, OR 97754

www.fs.fed.us



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General rules of thumb, points to consider, and feedback from Forest Service/Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife resource specialists for system-wide OTSG proposals.

Transportation/Roads:

As increased recreational traffic use goes up so will road maintenance costs. Due to capacity and costs compromises and tradeoffs will need to be made on other parts of the Forest road system.

Official approved "Mixed use" (motorized plated vehicles and non-motorized recreation) will need close scrutiny and evaluation in regards to safety. Sight distances and speed will need to be evaluated. This analysis will be essential to determine safety concerns that have been historically low risk such as firewood cutting/gathering and recreation. New use designation along/on road systems may increase this use.

Road and trailhead maintenance/development costs will increase the further you move away from needed sources. Gravel pits, Prineville, etc.

Early engineering development in future trail design will be important to reduce cost specifically in regards to new bridge location, length, and abutment needs.

Recreation:

Do remote trails that the majority of users consider too far for day trips have adequate infrastructure for overnight use. (Dispersed sites, campground, sanitation/toilets)

Assure trail design is sustainable for the intended uses and can accommodate increased use in the future. Trail design should anticipate liberal increased use in most applications thinking 10-20 years in the future.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) & Implementation:

A Trail Master Plan will be important to ensure appropriate NEPA strategies and analysis. Understanding the long term trail implementation goals will allow a better appreciation of cumulative effects and significant impacts.

Numerous CE's on adjacent trail projects have difficulty addressing cumulative effects of similar actions.

A Master Plan will help determine the appropriate NEPA path. I.e. Categorical Exclusion (CE), Environmental Analysis (EA), Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), etc.

Wildlife:

“Core Habitat” mapping should be considered in proposals to ensure limited fragmentation of the landscape occurs. Breaking up connectivity of habitat, in addition to increased use, may statistically increase statistical disturbance of wildlife in different spatial degrees.

Approved areas and trails will need monitoring from known baselines to understand impacts to wildlife. Monitoring plans will include trigger points initiating levels of adaptive management to mitigate impacts and determine improved solutions.

It will be important to analyze for the specific uses intended and the effects of events that spike use for periods of time. Events and their associated participant numbers may have unintended disturbance effects.

Having a developed strategy around event approval will be important.

Seasonal restrictions may be an important tool to utilize trail opportunities in areas known to be critical wildlife winter range.

Compact trail networks on a smaller foot print of ground have less disturbance impact to wildlife than sprawling networks covering more acres.

Invasives/Threatened and Endangered Plants:

Rare/Sensitive plants- Avoidance will occur through detailed surveys once trails locations are being drafted on the ground through flagging. Involving specialists early in location will be important for quality outcomes.

Approximately a dozen plants have been added to the Pacific Northwest T&E list that will need to be surveyed for during project proposals. Currently, the trails as proposed overlap with 8 sensitive plant sites which are all Peck’s mariposa lily populations.

Invasives- The trails as proposed intersect with 56 invasive plant sites, including knapweeds, chicory, Hound’s-Tongue, St Johnswort, Mediterranean sage, and Medusahead. The majority of the overlaps are on the west side of the forest on Lookout Mtn Ranger District. One hotspot is south and a little east of the RNA where a large area of Hound’s-Tongue exists.

Weeds will have more vectors through increased use. Weed education campaigns are a critical component to new trail development to reduce spread. I.e. Medusahead and Knapweed issues exist near Lemon Creek proposed MTB trail location. Hound’s-Tongue exists near Endurance Equestrian trails. How will more use impact spread potential?

Dry low elevation locations are of greater risk for invasive colonization than others.

Pretreatment of new trailhead disturbance and development, follow-up treatment, revegetation to reduce pioneer invasives from colonizing barren environments, and monitoring will be imperative components to new trail networks. Up to a two year planning cycle is critical in certain soil types to assure germination windows in spring and fall are captured.

Fisheries and Aquatics:

Improve trail stream crossing Forest-Grassland wide to reduce sediment and associated turbidity during recreational passage. Higher speed activities with more ground contact often have more impact. Additional trails will need more attention to these crossing issues. Hardening approaches will be important.

Agency coordination and requisite permitting for in stream work and wet area crossing features such as step stones/bog bridges/turnpiking

Water run off periods create pulses of higher sediment potential. Recreational traffic during these windows exacerbate this concern. There needs to be discussion how to best handle these spring and fall issues through education, self-policing, closures, etc.

Large one day use numbers increase turbidity impacts by reducing the dilution effect of time. This should be considered for events and other activities that bring increased use during short periods.

Vegetation Management:

Multiple use concepts will have recreation and vegetation management on the same ground. There can be a symbiotic relationship between the two, but long term flexibility will be important. For public safety certain trails may have periods of closure during commercial thinning, non-commercial thinning, prescribed burning operations, etc.

Haul and skid roads may also be closed in certain situations.

'Visuals" on existing and proposed trails will be impacted to varying degrees by mechanized and non-mechanized vegetation removal. This should be considered and understood in future trail locations and managing recreational community expectations. Preparing for a different visual landscape pre and post vegetation treatments will be important.

Archeology-Heritage:

Range Management:

Trails crossing through allotment fencing should have a "walk through" or similar static no-swing design to ensure areas are not breached for unintentional cattle/sheep movement.

Most mountain bike use have existed on range allotments involving sheep such as in the Lookout Mountain, Round Mountain, and Potlid areas. Cooperation and discussion should occur as trail proposal occurs in cattle-centric allotments which may have increased safety issues as well as significant trail impacts from cattle.

Trail maintenance will be higher in cattle allotments as they will use the easiest path to move from point to point.

Education and cooperation between recreational users and allotment permit holders will be critical for long term success.

OTSG USFS Feedback Meeting – Raw Notes

8/22/19

Attending: Monte Gregg, wildlife bio; Duane and Ruth, Chris Joosen, Rec; Mary Beyer, Erik Fernandez, Kim McCarrel, Beth Peer, Enviro/NEPA; Jim Beaupre, Kevin Keown, Darlene Henderson, Travis Holman, Greg Jackal, ODF&W; Shane Jeffries, Forest Supervisor; Tory Kurtz, Range; Jennifer Mickelson; Monty Greg, wildlife bio; Slater Turner, District Ranger; Andrew Passarrelli Acting District Ranger.

Began with a review of the maps.

Elk security areas – GIS exercise for determining where they might be using areas. 200 acres in size and a ½ mile distance from motorized roads.

Also identified elk priority areas through the Blue Mtn. Elk initiative – places they wanted to put efforts forward to improve elk habitat.

And another layer was where there is elk damage happening outside the Forest which indicates where they are trying to keep elk away. Elk are a creature of disturbance.

Fleeing rate and distance are the greatest for motorized vehicles, then mtn. bikes, then equestrian, then hikers.

As elk collar study progresses, will be working closely with ODF&W and determining impact of active management and recreation. Deploying some traffic counters too.

Core habitat analysis – reviewed different disturbance studies and species. Did some distance banding/fragmentation analysis. Map identifies blocks of habitat at different sizes.

So, fragmentation is a big deal and we have an opportunity to get out ahead of it. Retaining core habitat is a key indicator/issue for

E.g. on the Deschutes, lots of fragmentation.

Most specialists didn't have specific concerns but rather broad-based concerns. Notes captured the rules of thumb, etc.

I asked the question about the Trails Master Plan language in the FS notes. CEs don't lend themselves to cumulative effects. So, it's a Master....

Gather data, resource assessment, then pick from that on the NEPA side the things that we are going to analyze. Master Plan is pre-NEPA.

Need to do more to monitor trail use – now and into the future.

Want a compact trail system that is highly designed.

What about habituation? Those are "town deer" – they don't migrate.

Elk security/emphasis map is driven by elk. Core habitat map is a combo of a bunch of different habitat.

Erik F – are you looking at migration corridors as well? Or just the polygons of habitat areas? Monty – we haven't talked about migration corridors yet.

Fisheries, botany, anthro?

Have to be really careful at stream crossings.

At this point we moved to the projected screen.....

More concerns in the west part of the Forest, and more trail proposals.

- Black Canyon area – no specific concerns on the hiking trails as proposed. Will be invasive and archy stuff.
- Area north of Big Summit – generally, thought was that most of the equestrian trails in the area did not have any specific concerns. Allen Camp area has existing roads that are being used. Seems like a good opportunity since there is a horse camp there.
- Trail 6/Endurance Ride – will be some concerns about moving trails on roads to official year-round trails on maps. Will be some site distance and specific site concerns that will need to be addressed. Limited concern from a resource perspective.
- Trail #16 – same kind of thing but will be more new trail development. Multi-use trail.
- Long x country mtn bike route #20 – there is a natural research area in part of it and that precludes trails going through it. Can move around that. Didn't dive too deeply into the rest of the trail b/c of that NRA.
- Whole Potlid Area – this area had the most amount of resource concerns re: large and small wildlife and fisheries. One main area on the forest where there's a lot of steelhead improvement potential. This is 17 and 22.
 - However, some of the lower multi-use trails providing some connection appear to have less – 11 and 10
- Trail 9 – Same general concern about fragmentation.
- Trail 8 – not as much concern.
- Trail 2 in current alignment wouldn't make sense but could be moved further north. Kim noted that we only wanted to link trailheads there and would be really fine to move it.

POTENTIAL PROJECT AREA

- Chris brought up a highlighted area – could be a project area where we look at multiple trails together. Handed this map out.
 - Area up near Scotty and Cougar – concerns were not as intense as Potlid, but some concerns re: additional trails up in there. Probably wouldn't want another entire network.
 - Bandit Springs looks to have good potential.
- Back to #9 – there is a corral there already. Parking management something or other?

- Mill Creek – this area is the next big planning area from a veg management perspective. Timber sale, thinning, RX burns, road management, etc. – (outside the wilderness area, but in the watershed).
 - Does this mean we could dovetail the two NEPA processes to get more bang for the buck? Probably not. Veg mgmt. takes longer.
 - Key is to keep a dialogue open regarding things like closures due to active management, desires to maintain “trail defining trees”, etc.
- Lemon Creek - #23 – this is the one that seems to have the least amount of issues and also is closer to town, not up as high elevation, etc. One issue with it is winter habitat for elk in the lower section. That can be managed with things like closures. There is a closed gate there anyway.
- Dry Creek Horse Camp Area – trails 3-4 – motorized access into those areas will be closed at times. Same kind of thing with 8, 23.

Kevin – this helps you see the areas that we’d like to see avoided.

There are opportunities to do other things – such as removing motorized access – that might mitigate some of the impacts we are looking at.

Next meeting – talk about what type of POW opportunities there are. Have put some placeholders in from the Rec Side for 2020. 2021 has more opportunities.

Question – how long will this all take? How much can you do in a Program of Work year?

Most likely the bulk of the field work would be 21 field season (spring 2021).

FY 20 program is pretty full right now.

*Therefore, we might want to emphasize something like the Endurance Rides now.

Darlene – so, for Lemon Creek (23) – can we start that in 2020? Yes, recreation folks can get that started. Just get the lines on the ground.

Ruth – would it make sense for you to give us a step-by-step todo list? Chris – no, we want to be next to you with that process and help you sort that out together.

Darlene - sooner we can get alternate mtn.biking areas the sooner we can divert some of that use on Lookout.

Goal is to get as many miles as we can in as small a space.

Kevin – as we’ve thought about it in the past, looking at current disturbance.... Maybe we have an old road that lends itself well to a trail... anything that you can capitalize on that is a good thing.

Erik – we’re pretty excited about the trail potential and nervous about the wildlife impacts. Very appreciative of this feedback.

If we are going to do a big NEPA, can we look at mitigation opportunities in other parts of the Forest.

Raeger Travel Mgmt Area – a green dot road system where motorized travel is only open in certain seasons. Could so more of this sort of stuff. Can we increase open space and closed areas?

Archy and botany are going to be important. Can we look for grants, etc. to bring in more resources/capacity.

- Neither Darlene nor Travis can be at that meeting but D will send Sarah a summary so that she can be prepared.
- Going to start flagging general corridors on (where?)

Next meeting agenda:

1. Debrief on today's meeting and pick our priorities.
2. Re-engage strategic plan
3. Community meeting plan – deliverables, map with focus areas, etc. – January?

**Consider making web-based GIS stuff to show all of these layers at once. Erik F can help us with this.

Kevin – how long would it take to do NEPA – be thinking about that schedule?

Darlene is going to prep presentation to the Crook County Court by the end of the month.

From: Beaupre, James - FS
Sent: Tue, 5 May 2020 21:47:25 +0000
To: Peer, Beth -FS;Joosen, Christopher -FS
Subject: FW: Core Habitat Analysis Process - OTSG
Attachments: Core Habitat Analysis.docx

Monty's core habitat analysis.

From: Gregg, Monty -FS
Sent: Wednesday, June 5, 2019 5:13 PM
To: Keown, Kevin -FS <kevin.keown@usda.gov>; Joosen, Christopher -FS <christopher.joosen@usda.gov>; Beaupre, James - FS <james.beaupre@usda.gov>
Subject: Core Habitat Analysis Process - OTSG

Fellas,

I provided OTSG with a Core habitat analysis map at the same time that I provided the elk security map. The Core Habitat process was developed on the Deschutes to assess impacts from both motorized and non-motorized use. This process was designed to determine habitat effectiveness for a variety of wildlife covering our MIS species and not just focused on Elk Security and motorized disturbance.

Attached is the abbreviated version of the Core Habitat process. Please look it over as we will be applying it to help us develop strategies to build the best sustainable non-motorized system that we can. I will bring the Core habitat map with the associated proposed trails so folks can get a look at habitat effectiveness. In addition, can compare it to what other veg management activities that are going on in that landscape.



Monty Gregg
Forest Wildlife Biologist
Region 6 Upland Game Bird Center of Excellence

Forest Service
Ochoco National Forest
Crooked River National Grassland

p: 541-416-6508

f: 541-416-6695

monty.gregg@usda.gov

3160 N.E. 3rd Street

Prineville, OR 97754

www.fs.fed.us



Caring for the land and serving people

From: Keown, Kevin -FS
Sent: Tuesday, June 4, 2019 4:02 PM
To: Gregg, Monty -FS <monty.gregg@usda.gov>; David, James R -FS <james.david@usda.gov>; Ferriel, Jennifer L -FS <jenifer.ferriel@usda.gov>; Wilcox, Jason M -FS <jason.wilcox@usda.gov>; Gritzner, Jason -FS <jason.gritzner@usda.gov>; Peer, Beth -FS <beth.peer@usda.gov>; Retzlaff, Elysia M -FS <elysia.retzlaff@usda.gov>
Cc: Joosen, Christopher -FS <christopher.joosen@usda.gov>; Beaupre, James - FS <james.beaupre@usda.gov>
Subject: FW: Please invite your Resource Specialists into the OTSG Trail Proposal process.

Hi All, Please see Chris's note below. It's really our opportunity to have an influence on the thought process of the Ochoco Trails Strategy Group and I really hope you all make time to review the maps. Chris has set up a number of sessions to meet to go over the trail proposals, trying to accommodate everyone's busy schedules. Thanks, Kevin



Kevin Keown
Natural Resources Staff Officer
Forest Service
Ochoco National Forest & Crooked River National Grassland

p: 541-416-6605
c: (b)(6)
kevin.keown@usda.gov

3160 NE 3rd Street
Prineville, OR 97754
www.fs.fed.us



Caring for the land and serving people

From: Joosen, Christopher -FS
Sent: Friday, May 24, 2019 3:26 PM
To: Jeffries, Shane -FS <shane.jeffries@usda.gov>; Turner, Slater R -FS <slater.turner@usda.gov>; Kovarik, Johanna -FS <johanna.kovarik@usda.gov>; Keown, Kevin -FS <kevin.keown@usda.gov>
Cc: Beaupre, James - FS <james.beaupre@usda.gov>; Peer, Beth -FS <beth.peer@usda.gov>; Retzlaff, Elysia M -FS <elysia.retzlaff@usda.gov>
Subject: Please invite your Resource Specialists into the OTSG Trail Proposal process.

Shane, Johanna, Slater and Kevin, Please forward the below message to your Resource Specialists, Program Managers, and anyone else you believe should be involved. I will work directly with Kevin to involve our ODFW partners. Thanks for being engaged to move this large community driven process into the next phase. This is another pivot point to ensure we fully consider all resources while bringing Forest and Grassland recreation into the future, sustainably and deliberately. Chris

Ochoco Resource Specialists and Managers, As you may recall, the local Ochoco Trails Strategy Group (OTSG) worked over the past 2 years on a comprehensive Forest wide, non-motorized,

trails proposal. Two months ago they made their official proposal to us and we've been working on the next steps since then. This is where you come in to help us move forward.

To help OTSG prioritize specific trail projects for us to consider moving into the POW and planning process, we'd like to get some big picture thoughts and comments from your resource specialty area. This is in essence a pre-project proposal consultation from you to look at the OTSG Trail proposal map, with several added layers, and point out big picture issues we should be considering. We will then take all the resource area comments and work with OTSG for them to understand what areas have more concerns than others. This will help set them, and us, up for success by considering potential projects areas best suited to avoid the most resource concerns. This holistic look should dramatically help with a successful prioritization strategy when considering the entire OTSG proposal. In turn, it will help bring quality project proposals for the Forest to move into our typical planning and analysis of alternatives and determine effects.

If you want to spend some time looking at the maps before sitting down with me they will be hanging in the Alder room beginning on June 3rd. You should see 3 maps to assure the overlays aren't too busy. They will show the proposed trails by type, Subwatersheds, Elk Security, and Management Areas. We will also be extending these opportunities to our partners at ODFW to assure we capture broad thoughts and expertise while also maintaining relationships with our key partners.

To jumpstart your thoughts as you review the maps please think about these questions:

- Are there any LRMP/Forest Plan conflicts that jump out?
- Are there trail development conflicts within the spirit, definition, and requirements of different MAs?
- Are there certain trail uses that are incompatible year round with your resource area? Seasonally?
- Are there certain types of user trails that are better than others for your resource area?
- Are there other specific impacts to your resource area....or very broad comments generally?

Below are 8 one-hour options to sit down and look at the map with layers and point out any concerns that pop out for you. I wanted to assure we had options that were spread out across times of the day, and the month, to accommodate everyone. Please let me know what session works best for you. Thanks again for your help. Chris

Thursday June 6, 800-900

Thursday June 6, 1230-1330

Wednesday June 12, 800-900

Wednesday June 12, 1230-1330

Wednesday June 12, 1530-1630

Thursday June 13, 800-900

Thursday June 13, 1230-1330

Thursday June 20, 1000-1100



Christopher Joosen
Recreation, Wilderness and Special Uses Staff Officer

Forest Service

Ochoco National Forest & Crooked River
National Grassland, Supervisor's Office

Office: 541-416-6516

Cell: (b)(6)

christopher.joosen@usda.gov

3160 NE Third Street
Prineville, OR 97754

www.fs.fed.us



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Core Habitat Analysis

Trails Analysis Process Refined:

Distance banding was chosen as a starting point for our analysis process for several reasons: it's fairly simple to complete, it represents the geographic distribution of habitat that can be overlaid with other relevant suitability maps and landscape features, it provides meaningful measures for comparison between existing and future conditions or between alternatives, and provides insight into important landscape-level dynamics such as habitat connectivity. The objective of this process is to maintain the best existing core habitat available and fully consider opportunities for improving conditions in important habitat areas already impacted. The measure for success is a comparison between an accurate current condition and the anticipated future condition that maintains or improves the average core habitat patch size, maintains or improves the proportion of large core habitat patches and considers their distribution in relation to other large habitat patches and important landscape features.

Wildlife Objective: Maintain the best existing core habitat available and fully consider opportunities for improving conditions in important habitat areas already impacted.

Measure: Maintain or improve the average core habitat patch size, proportion of large core habitat patches and consider the distribution of large core patches in relation to each other and important landscape features.

Step 1: Project Development and Application of Screening Criteria

Coordination in the development phase of trail projects is vital to producing a proposed action with mutual resource benefit. The example above is intended to provide ideas and will require modification, added detail and coordination with other resources and external partners for project application.

Step 2: Identify a Meaningful Analysis Area Based on Biologically Relevant Factors

In most cases, an area larger than the project footprint will need to be analyzed to produce meaningful results. This will vary based on topography, habitat extent, expanse of recreation use (recreation asset zone), and focal species for management.

Step 3: Obtain an Accurate Current Condition

Mapping of core habitat patches is only valuable at a project scale with accurate information. This must include up-to-date status on open, closed and decommissioned roads and trails, as well as user-created

routes. It is also important to understand other Forest uses in the area and how they are being managed. Uses such as utility corridors and communication sites, grazing, and proposed timber and fuels projects may have substantial influences on route management.

Step 4: Obtain Basic Distance Banding Information

Current literature supports a general disturbance buffer of 200 meters from open motorized roads and trails and 100 meters from closed roads and non-motorized trails (CITE). These figures can be fine-tuned based terrain, type of vegetation, dominate recreation use, time of year, frequency of use, party size, and tolerance levels of target management species.

Step 5: Calculate and Analyze Existing Core Habitat

The spaces remaining between disturbance buffers, when considered with other species-specific habitat suitability factors, represent core habitat patches. This does not mean areas outside the patch are unsuitable, it simply means there is a higher likelihood of wildlife experiencing human disturbance and other associated impacts outside core habitat patches. The patches represent a higher quality of habitat as wildlife are most likely to find refuge there. Current literature supports a minimum patch size of approximately 50 acres to provide meaningful benefits to wildlife (CITE). The largest patch sizes available on the landscape may vary based on your project area – for the developed portions of the Deschutes National Forest a break-out of approximately 100 acres was applicable. This represents the best of what habitat is currently available. Figures should be calculated showing average patch size, total core habitat and core habitat in patches under 50 acres (limited suitability), 50-100 acres (potentially suitable), and over 100 acres (highest quality). These are displayed in acres as well as proportion of analysis area and proportion of the total core habitat acres, as shown in Figure 002. Route density may need to be calculated if a comparison to management standards is needed and measured this way. This figure is most useful if calculated completely (including roads and trails) and broken out into roads only and trails only.

Core habitat patches are farther analyzed to determine their contribution to habitat connectivity. All patches over 1 acre are buffered by 0.25 miles (the distance of two adjacent core patches separated by one motorized disturbance buffer) and then clipped to the original core habitat patch boundaries to determine how much overlap each patch buffer has with neighboring core patches. Patches with the most acres of overlap were assumed to be of highest value for habitat connectivity. Although there are more accurate and complex analysis techniques for measuring habitat connectivity, this approach is simple and quick to apply and produces a measure for comparison between existing and future conditions or between alternatives. In addition, it highlights important areas to focus retention or restoration efforts to most benefit wildlife resources. The connectivity buffer of 0.25 miles may vary based on numerous factors, such as movement preferences of target species. The 0.25 mile figure was chosen as a representation of the best of what is available in the developed portions of the Deschutes National Forest – where from one core habitat patch, an animal may cross a single open road or motorized trail to find a core habitat patch on the other side. This analysis only provides information on

internal connectivity (within the analysis boundary) as patches adjacent to the analysis boundary are disadvantaged by not having neighboring patches.

FIGURE 002: CORE HABITAT PATCH ANALYSIS MEASURES

ANALYSIS MEASURES
Average Core Patch Size (acres)
Route Density (Roads and Trails Combined, Roads Only, Trails Only)
Acres/Proportion of Analysis Area/Proportion of Core Habitat Acres for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total Core Habitat;• Core Patches under 50 acres;• Core Patches 50-100 acres;• And Core Patches over 100 acres
Core Patch Acres Contributing to Connectivity

Step 6: Consider Impacts to Core Habitat from Trail Proposal

Overlaying proposed trail developments on core habitat maps produces our first insight into potential project impacts. Are large or otherwise important core habitat patches compromised by proposed trail development? Develop an anticipated future condition by creating disturbance buffers on proposed trails and recalculating the core habitat patch analysis measures. How have the numbers shifted – are there more core habitat acres under the 50 acre patch size that are now less functional? Are large patch acres unmodified? What is the impact to core patch acres contributing to connectivity?

Step 7: Modify/Mitigate Proposal to Maximize Core Habitat

Can the proposed routes causing the largest impact to core habitat patches be modified? Can the impacts be lessened through the application of design criteria (See Appendix B)? Can impacts be mitigated with restoration efforts (bringing existing roads/trails up to standard, rebuilding/maintaining trail or road closures, rerouting/combining/obliterating trails that are not purpose driven or are repetitive/underused/etc, obliterating user-created trails)? Are there opportunities to consolidate routes into existing disturbance corridors? Are there opportunities to collocate summer and winter trails, encourage multiple use on existing trails, or accommodate multiple skill levels with a single route using 'opt-out paths' around challenging features? Try to find creative solutions that support the purpose and need for trail development while minimizing impacts to wildlife resources. This may produce a modified proposed action or drive the development of wildlife alternatives.

Step 8: Recalculate Core Acres to Show Maintained or Improved Conditions

Develop an anticipated future condition by creating disturbance buffers on modified proposals or developed alternatives and recalculate the core habitat patch analysis measures. How have the

numbers shifted? Highlight important distinctions between the current, proposed and alternate habitat conditions for comparison.

Step 9: Implement Trail Proposal, Monitor and Revise

Specialist involvement beyond project analysis can provide added benefit to trail projects. One example is the review of final trail layout to avoid important wildlife habitat features that may determine small-scale suitability of habitat – features such as large logs, snags, riparian corridors/wetlands, patches of hiding cover/retention stands, squirrel middens, guzzlers and caves. Additionally, monitoring efforts are needed to provide feedback on whether project objectives are being met, and inform future efforts or drive the development of follow-up management actions.

Step 10: Communicate

The need to balance recreational trail interests with maintaining high quality wildlife habitat must be effectively and broadly communicated. Audiences include internal partners, recreational trail groups, environmental organizations, wildlife interest groups, wilderness interest groups, media and visitor information providers, other land management and wildlife agencies, conservation education leaders, outfitter/guides, recreation-oriented businesses, community groups and the general public. The development and implementation of a communication plan should be considered a top priority for sustainable trail development efforts and is essential for developing community support. See Appendix D.

From: Joosen, Christopher -FS
Sent: Mon, 21 Jun 2021 21:14:41 +0000
To: Turner, Slater -FS;Kurtz, Tory -FS;Keown, Kevin -FS;Beaupre, James - FS;Peer, Beth- FS;Benedict, Christian -FS;Kochersberger, Jonathan - FS;Passarelli, Andrew -FS
Cc: Jeffries, Shane- FS, Prineville, OR
Subject: RE: Response to Request Move the Trail Project

Slater's message brought back some memories about the 30,000 ft level comments specialists made as our first response to the Ochoco Trails Strategy Group (now Ochoco Trails-OT) final draft proposal. The below went back to them so they could do some refinements for their final. These comments came from your thoughts to the hanging maps we had in the Alder Room for a while and then sit down time with me. I'll also send these to OT as a reminder as they work to finalize their Grassland proposal. Chris

General rules of thumb, points to consider, and big picture feedback from Forest Service/Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife resource specialists for system-wide OTSG proposals.

Transportation/Roads:

As increased recreational traffic use goes up so will road maintenance costs. Due to capacity and costs, compromises and tradeoffs will need to be made on other parts of the Forest road system.

Official approved "Mixed use" (motorized plated vehicles and non-motorized recreation) will need close scrutiny and evaluation in regards to safety. Sight distances and speed will need to be evaluated. This analysis will be essential to determine safety concerns that have been historically low risk such as firewood cutting/gathering and recreation. New use designation along/on road systems may increase this use.

Road and trailhead maintenance/development costs will increase the further you move away from needed sources. Gravel pits, Prineville, etc.

Early engineering development in future trail design will be important to reduce cost specifically in regards to new bridge location, length, and abutment needs.

Recreation:

Do remote trails that the majority of users consider too far for day trips have adequate infrastructure for overnight use? (Dispersed sites, campground, sanitation/toilets)

Assure trail design is sustainable for the intended uses and can accommodate increased use in the future. Trail design should anticipate liberal increased use in most applications thinking 10-20 years in the future.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) & Implementation:

A Trail Master Plan will be important to ensure appropriate NEPA strategies and analysis. Understanding the long term trail implementation goals will allow a better appreciation of cumulative effects and significant impacts.

Numerous CE's on adjacent trail projects have difficulty addressing cumulative effects of similar actions. A Master Plan will help determine the appropriate NEPA path. I.e. Categorical Exclusion (CE), Environmental Analysis (EA), Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), etc.

Wildlife:

“Core Habitat” mapping should be considered in proposals to ensure limited fragmentation of the landscape occurs. Breaking up connectivity of habitat, in addition to increased use, may statistically increase statistical disturbance of wildlife in different spatial degrees.

Approved areas and trails will need monitoring from known baselines to understand impacts to wildlife. Monitoring plans will include trigger points initiating levels of adaptive management to mitigate impacts and determine improved solutions.

It will be important to analyze for the specific uses intended and the effects of events that spike use for periods of time. Events and their associated participant numbers may have unintended disturbance effects.

Having a developed strategy around event approval will be important.

Seasonal restrictions may be an important tool to utilize trail opportunities in areas known to be critical wildlife winter range.

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Multiple use concepts will have recreation and vegetation management on the same ground. There can be a symbiotic relationship between the two, but long term flexibility will be important. For public safety certain trails may have periods of closure during commercial thinning, non-commercial thinning, prescribed burning operations, etc.

Haul and skid roads may also be closed in certain situations.

'Visuals' on existing and proposed trails will be impacted to varying degrees by mechanized and non-mechanized vegetation removal. This should be considered and understood in future trail locations and managing recreational community expectations. Preparing for a different visual landscape pre and post vegetation treatments will be important.

Range Management:

Trails crossing through allotment fencing should have a "walk through" or similar static no-swing design to ensure areas are not breached for unintentional cattle/sheep movement.

Most mountain bike use have existed on range allotments involving sheep such as in the Lookout Mountain, Round Mountain, and Potlid areas. Cooperation and discussion should occur as trail proposal occurs in cattle-centric allotments which may have increased safety issues as well as significant trail impacts from cattle.

Trail maintenance will be higher in cattle allotments as they will use the easiest path to move from point to point.

Education and cooperation between recreational users and allotment permit holders will be critical for long term success.



Christopher Joosen
Recreation, Heritage, Lands and Partnerships Staff Officer

Forest Service
Ochoco National Forest & Crooked River
National Grassland, Supervisor's Office

Office: 541-416-6516

Cell: (b)(6)

christopher.joosen@usda.gov

3160 NE Third Street
Prineville, OR 97754

www.fs.fed.us



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From: Turner, Slater -FS <slater.turner@usda.gov>

Sent: Sunday, June 20, 2021 3:12 PM

To: Joosen, Christopher -FS <christopher.joosen@usda.gov>; Kurtz, Tory -FS <tory.kurtz@usda.gov>; Keown, Kevin -FS <kevin.keown@usda.gov>; Beaupre, James - FS <james.beaupre@usda.gov>; Peer, Beth- FS <Elizabeth.Peer@usda.gov>; Benedict, Christian -FS <christian.benedict@usda.gov>; Kochersberger, Jonathan - FS <jonathan.kochersberger@usda.gov>; Passarelli, Andrew -FS <andrew.passarelli@usda.gov>

Cc: Turner, Slater -FS <slater.turner@usda.gov>; Jeffries, Shane- FS <A.Jeffries2@usda.gov>

Subject: Response to Request Move the Trail Project

Hello All,

I would like to thank all you for voicing your concerns and support for the Lemon Gulch Trail Project. I do hear and understand some of the concerns permittees have about this project. When we met with the permittees and the Ochoco Trails Group on May 27th. I was encouraged by the willingness of Travis from Ochoco Trails, Roy Buyers and Shelly, our permittees, to work together to develop a solution and/or compromise in order for grazing to continue and for mountain bikers to ride on established trails. During their conversation I heard that they are not set on 50 miles of trails and willing to move trailheads in order not to change where loading/off loading cattle and salting areas are currently located.

As far as moving the proposed mountain bike trail to a different location, I am not in support of that, because a lot of effort went into analyzing where the best location on district we could develop a mountain bike trail system. Chris Joosen met initially with some key specialists i.e. Aquatics, Range, Timber, to name a few specialists, to discuss where on the district where you would have some concerns about a trail system. Chris took that information and shared it with the Ochoco Trails group. Ochoco Trails Group has a diverse group of stakeholders, including Back Country Horseman, Range Permittees, and COTA, just to name a few, that all supported the Lemon Gulch proposal.

As you can see a lot of work went into determining the location of this proposed trail system. Again, I thank all of you for your efforts and it is my hope and expectation that we will all work together to make this a successful project.

Any thought/concerns please let me know.



Slater Turner
District Ranger

**Ochoco National Forest, Lookout Mountain RD &
Crooked River National Grassland**

p: 541-416-6448

cell: (b)(6)

slater.turner@usda.gov

3160 NE Third Street
Prineville, OR 97754

www.fs.fed.us



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